

WHERE HAVE THE GREAT SANDBAGGERS GONE?

boxers, presidential candidates, pool-players --
nowadays they all have this in common:
they'll tell you not only that they'll win
but will name the round, the score, the margin,
the balls that you'll have on the table.

whatever happened to the guy who told you
that he hadn't touched a stick in years,
then ran ten tables in succession?
the skinny guy who had to take
his arm out of the sling
before wrestling all the longshoremen's
forearms to a pin?
the over-the-hill gunfighter,
arguing like abraham lincoln
against any breaching of the peace,
but with his piece beneath the table
trained on the pipsqueak's balls?
the seeming dunderhead
who smiles blankly through
the swashing and buckling of the epicene
before melting their verbal rapiers
with colder irony?

i loved muhammed ali -- he was as much a part
of two decades as were the beatles.
but his consummate showmanship
spawned a revival of pike county blusterers.

if the next few years are to be characterized,
as i fear, by aggression, repression, suppression,
and downright persecution,

then we will need
(clark kent was one -- all of our
underwraps heroes of the fifties were)
the sandbaggers.

THE EVENING'S GRADING WAS NOT A LOSS

i wasn't sure whether it was a freudian slip
or joycean interface
when my student perpetrated
the spelling "neighboor."